



Razia Jan chats with residents at Sunday's tea at the Senior Center, titled "Girl Power, Afghan Style." Jan gave an update on the Zabuli School for Girls in Afghanistan and talked about her work in that country.

Girl power, Afghan style

Zabuli school for girls thriving, says founder

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The main function room at the Senior Center was lined with photographs from the Zabuli School for Girls as Razia Jan returned to Duxbury to update residents and donors on the school's progress. The smiling faces of the young women were reminders of the good Duxbury natives have done for students halfway around the world.

The Zabuli School is a girls' school in the village of Deh Subz, near Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. It was built in 2008 with money raised by the Duxbury Rotary Club and many others. At the heart of the project was Razia Jan, an Afghan native who owned a tailor shop



People look over a variety of Afghan goods and craft items available for sale at Sunday's talk.

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Zabuli school doing well

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in Duxbury. After the school was built, Jan took a job as program director for Arzu, a Chicago-based nonprofit that works with women rug weavers in the rugged north of Afghanistan.

Jan does return to Duxbury from time to time to update the community on the progress of the school and her foundation, Razia's Ray of Hope.

"I don't have words for how supportive you've been," Jan told the crowd over tea at the Senior Center on Sunday afternoon.

Jan spoke effusively about the school's new paint job, calling it "like The White House." The building, which is two stories high and has 14 rooms, will someday have to be expanded if the student body keeps growing.

"We need to expand our building," she said.

The building has always been surrounded by a wooden fence, which provides security and screens the girls from the street. However, in the tough Afghan winter, residents were stripping the boards to burn for fuel. The wood was recently replaced with a stone wall, and a new gate at the front of the

AVERAGE SCHOOL EXPENSES

Pencil:	\$1
Notebook:	\$2
Backpack:	\$10
Uniform and shoes:	\$20
Tuition:	\$250
Teacher salary:	\$900
Total student supplies:	\$1,200
Building maintenance:	\$1,300
Books:	\$3,400
Snacks:	\$6,000
Total operating costs:	\$78,000

school was installed. Jan said the wall cost about \$8-9,000, and the school also bought a new van for the teachers to use (they had been renting) for about \$10,000.

"I want to really grow and secure the school," Jan said. "That's our goal and we are going towards that."

Jan is also particularly proud of the fact that they have retained nearly 90 percent of their teachers since the school opened, and she talked about the students who have been at the school all three years.

"They love to come to school," she said.

She also pointed out that the school is the only one of Kabul's 260 private schools that is 100 percent free.

"They appreciate that," she said of the children. "They want to learn, their families are protecting us, they're protecting their children."

While she is happy with the success of the school, Jan is realistic about the struggles in every day Afghanistan. Several attendees on Sunday asked her if the recent troubles in Afghanistan could affect the school.

"It's a small world, my world, but it's working out," Jan said. "There's no guarantees. You might not see me next year."

For Jan, it's not enough to merely have a school. She doesn't think of the Zabuli school as a charity — she wants the school to stand tall among the private schools in Afghanistan. She wants the desks to be clean, the uniforms to be bright and for the girls to have the best education possible.

"It's important for them not to have just something, but I want them to have the best," she said.